

For Everything There is a Season

Luke 19:28-40; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 4-01-07

I am fairly certain we all are familiar with the opening words of Ecclesiastes 3 which remind us: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up what has been planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to keep silence and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.”

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem it was “a time to speak.” The author of Luke quotes Habbakuk in saying the “stones will cry out” if the people are silent. The times of silence were over. There was no quieting the disciples. The times of miracles that needed to be kept quiet were done with. His work on earth was drawing to a close and it was the final hurrah—those last moments when who he was would be made clear to those who would stop, look and listen. Some did and some did not.

As we enter this last week of Lent, this Holy Week, we follow Jesus through the days and nights. He cleansed the temple in some accounts, taught a bit, instituted the sacrament of communion, and prayed a lot to discover what the will of God was for his life. In the Garden of Gethsemane he confronted his fear of what was before him when he asked if there was not a chance the bitter cup of death could pass him by. But he also prayed that his will be set aside and that God’s be done. We sometimes forget that Jesus was a very young man, younger than most of us, about 33 years old, when he came face to face with his own death. Then, following that evening in the Garden when the direction of his life was determined, he was put to death on a cross by those who could not bear the new wine they felt sloshing around in the old wineskins of their religious, social and political structures.

What did he do that was so wrong? He brought a new way of thinking about practicing his faith. He moved beyond the written law to that which must be felt within the hearts and souls of men and women. He saw with new eyes those around him. At first his mission was only to “the lost sheep of Israel,” but as time went by it broadened to include all who had ears and who would listen. There were times he was pushed to such broader inclusion. Remember the meeting with the Samaritan woman who pleaded for the crumbs of healing he might provide for her daughter? But most often he crossed all lines of nationality, gender and social standing keeping his eyes and his mind open to those who surrounded him seeking healing, knowledge and a sense of direction to help them find their way through life.

We are not much different from those people who followed him and longed for his touch. We yearn to hear the “good news” of the life that is to come and the way we are to live on this earth before we move on to that next level of existence. At times we must shake our heads over the way we ignore his teachings about love, forgiveness, inclusiveness as we seek to keep ourselves safe in our own little worlds. At these times we do not act in the manner of our Teacher and Shepherd. Even though we know we are called and we might say, “Here I am, Lord, send me,” we pick and choose our way though the lessons he sought to teach us to make sure we come out looking good while turning deaf ears and blind eyes to those who struggle beside us.

This last week of his earthly life, we need to focus on how it is we all fall short of what it was he asked us to do. It should be a week of reflection, remembrance and renewal. It should be the season and the time to really know who we are and how we operate in life. There needs to be space and time allowed for a prayerful consideration of our lives and a decision that we will become better humans because of the way that has been shown to us.

As always, the choice is ours as to whether we will truly begin to follow or whether will pay cheap lip service to all we know of the way, the truth and the life. We alone can decide if the life and teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus really make a difference for us. This truly is the season and this is the time. Amen